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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

PAKISTAN'S AFGHAN REFUGEES

SUMMARY

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Pakistan's Afghan Refugees

• Who Are They?

Since the spring of 1978, more than 2.7 million Afghans have been registered as refugees in Pakistan. Registration records indicate that 80 to 90 percent of them are Pushtun tribesmen, comprising about a third of the estimated 6.5 to 7 million Pushtun ethnic community in Afghanistan. (About half of Afghanistan's pre-1978 population was classified as Pushtuns). Many of the refugees brought livestock with them and most of them are farmers or farm laborers; some are pastoral nomads and a lesser but significant number among them are professionals and the well-to-do. (U)

• 300 New Towns

Based on 1981 Census of Pakistan figures, the Afghan refugees have doubled the population in Pakistan's western borderlands. To deal more effectively with the massive numbers, Pakistani relief officials group refugees where possible into camps averaging 5,000 to 10,000 persons or 1,000 families each. Approximately 300 Refugee Tented Villages (RTVs) have been established, most of which are located in the formerly completely rural Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). (U)


The majority of the camps are clustered in six areas near major points of entry into Pakistan: the Bajaur-Dir area, the environs of Peshawar, the Kurram River valley, and the Gomal River valley in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP); and the Pishin-Quetta and the Chagai Hills areas in Baluchistan. Where possible, relief officials attempt to locate the camps at least 10 miles from the border to avoid providing a provocation for Soviet cross-border raids. The camp sites are adjacent to a motorable road, near a source of water, and on land not suitable for agriculture or other immediate use by the local population. Food and shelter (tents) are provided by international relief organizations and volunteer agencies, but water supplies, grazing space, and firewood for fuel are scarce. (U)

• Refugees as Guests

The GOP publicly refrains from giving the refugees other than temporary status, by allowing the use of only temporary shelter (tents), and by discouraging activities that would place the refugees in competition with the local population, particularly in ethnically sensitive Baluchistan. At the same time, efforts are quietly being made to disperse camp populations away from the border both for security reasons and to alleviate the strain on over-burdened resources in the frontier areas. (U)

Loss of Ethnic Homogeneity

The Afghan refugees are largely confined to Pushtun ethnic areas in NWFP and Baluchistan where they share kinship ties and a cultural value system with the people among whom they live. Although US Embassy officials report little open resentment of the refugees among the
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• Resource Pressures

The refugee camps are located in areas that have been experiencing heavy outmigration over the past decade. The probable cause, according to a World Bank study, is the continuing degradation of the natural environment in an area where traditionally 80 percent of the tribesmen have been dependent on some form of subsistence agriculture. More specifically, the World Bank report pinpointed increased erosion and lowered agricultural productivity resulting from overgrazing, overcutting of the region's tree growth for firewood, and poor farming techniques. (OUG)

